

CITY OF GOLDEN,
HARVEST SOUL OF
LIVING BREAD

A Journal of Faith

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City of Golden Harvest Soul of Living Bread

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*To the resilient people of Cabanatuan City, whose lives and stories
reflect the enduring light of the Gospel.*

*For my family and mentors, who taught me to see the hand of God in
the headlines of our daily lives.*

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Foreword

Preface

The streets of Cabanatuan City are rarely silent. From the constant hum of tricycles along the Maharlika Highway to the vast, whispering rice fields that define our horizon, our city is a place of movement, struggle, and growth. Often, we consume the news of our city as mere data: a fire in a barangay, a new factory rising from the dust, or a headline about a life tragically cut short. We read, we sigh, and we move on.

But what happens when we stop to look at these local headlines through the lens of the Eternal Word?

This book is the result of that pause. It is a collection of reflections born from a simple realization: the Gospels are not ancient stories locked in the past; they are living maps for the present. When I read about the \$100 million agricultural complex (KAMIC), I do not just see machinery; I see the biblical call to “prepare the way” and “bear good fruit.” When I hear the sirens in Barangay Matadero, I am reminded of the Apostles on the mountain—stripped of their comforts and called into a radical new community of faith.

In these pages, I have attempted to bridge the gap between the “Now” and the “Forever.” I explore the “signs of the times” right here in Nueva Ecija—from the challenges faced by our farmers at PhilRice to the pursuit of justice led by our local leaders.

My hope is that as you read these reflections, you will begin to see your own surroundings differently. I hope you see that the Golden Rule is not just a moral theory, but a practical blueprint for the peace we seek in our streets. Whether we are facing the “whiteheads” in our fields or the “ashes” of a tragedy, we are never walking alone. The Gospel is unfolding every day in Cabanatuan. We only need the eyes of faith to see it.

Acknowledgments

Chapter 1

The news about the new Korea Agricultural Machinery Industry Complex (KAMIC)

In Nueva Ecija, a huge \$100 million factory, makes me think about what it means to prepare for the future. In the Bible, John the Baptist tells people to “prepare the way” for Jesus by changing their hearts. The KAMIC project is like preparing the physical way for a better life for our farmers and our country. When we bring in big, modern machinery, we are sweeping away old, slow ways of farming. We are making the “paths straight” by removing the obstacles of inefficiency and low yields, hoping to make farming easier and more fruitful for everyone. This huge investment shows a commitment to changing the status quo, just as John the Baptist asked people to change their lives.

This brings us to the idea of bearing good fruit. John warned people that if they didn’t show real change, they would be cut down like a tree that doesn’t produce fruit. In farming, the “fruit” is the harvest—the food we eat. The new machinery from KAMIC is a powerful tool designed to help our country produce much more “good fruit.” It raises the standard for our agricultural sector. We can no longer settle for small, struggling harvests. This complex is a challenge to our farmers and leaders to use these new tools to be more productive and guarantee that the country has enough food. It’s a message that we need to stop being inefficient and start focusing on a larger, healthier yield for the nation.

Finally, the machinery reminds me of the winnowing fork used to separate the grain from the useless chaff. John said Jesus would come with this tool to separate the good people from the bad. The tools from KAMIC will act as a similar “winnowing” force in our agriculture. This technology will naturally favor the farms and farmers who are ready to learn, modernize, and

work efficiently (the wheat). At the same time, it may make it harder for those who hold onto inefficient, outdated methods (the chaff) to compete. The ultimate goal, both in the Bible's message and this new project, is a form of purification: moving away from what is stagnant or unproductive toward a cleaner, more bountiful, and successful future for the entire Philippine agricultural industry.

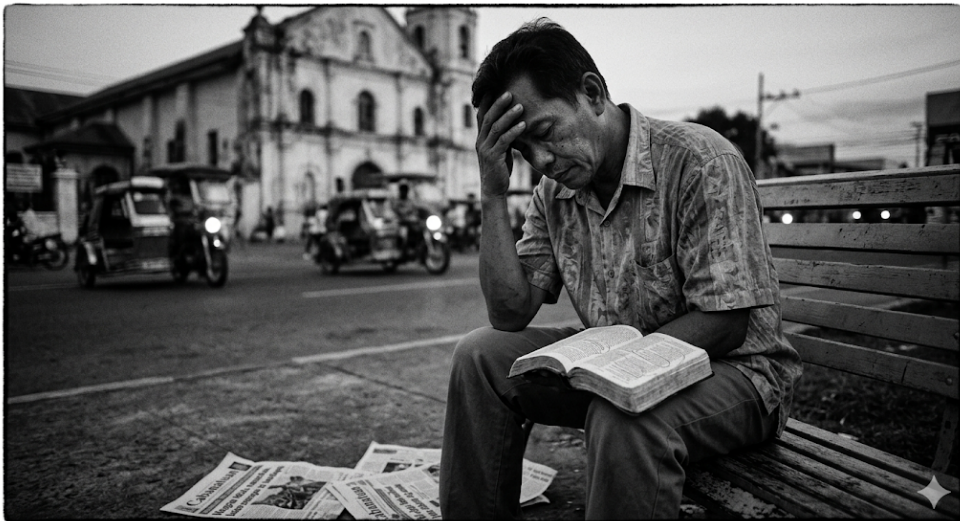
Chapter 2

Jesus explicitly warns his disciples, “Darakpin kayo’t uusigin... At ipapapatay ang ilan sa inyo” (You will be seized and persecuted... and some of you will be put to death).

This ancient warning resonates with chilling relevance when we look at the recent tragedy in Cabanatuan City, where a 52-year-old cyclist was shot dead along the Maharlika Highway. Violence, sudden and senseless, remains a part of our human experience. However, the Gospel does not leave us in despair; it invites us to view this tragic news not just as a crime report, but as a spiritual challenge to hold onto truth, justice, and hope amidst the darkness.

The Gospel reading illuminates the fragility of the people involved in this news story.

The cyclist, engaged in a routine activity, faced the sudden violence Jesus warned about. The mention of the “assailant riding in a motorcycle” mirrors the unpredictability of the enemies described in the Scripture. Furthermore, the text says, “Kayo’y dadalhin sa mga sinagoga upang litisin” (You will be brought to trial). In the context of the news, this illuminates the role of the police and the justice system. As authorities investigate “all possible angles and the motive,” they are entering a process of judgment. The Gospel reminds us that in moments of crisis, the true character of a community is tested—will we stand for justice, or will we let fear silence us



In the heart of Cabanatuan City, the ancient warnings of the Gospel meet the stark reality of the Maharlika Highway. This chapter explores the “Witness to the Truth”—a reflection on justice, endurance, and the promise that even in the face of persecution, not a hair on our heads shall perish. A journey through local news with an eternal perspective.

The Critique:

The text challenges the culture of impunity symbolized by the shooting. The act of killing a defenseless cyclist is a rejection of God’s law. The Scripture critiques a society where disputes or motives are settled by the barrel of a gun rather than through dialogue or justice.

The Hope:

Jesus promises, “Ngunit hindi mawawala ni isang hibla ng inyong buhok” (But not a hair on your head will perish). To the family of the victim, this may seem confusing since their loved one has died. However, this offers the spiritual hope that the victim’s integrity and soul are

safe with God. It is a challenge to believe that death is not the end of the story and that divine justice sees what human investigators might miss.

Signs of the Times

The event along Maharlika Highway reveals the “signs of the times” as an era of insecurity and the devaluation of life. Jesus warned, “Kapopootan kayo ng lahat” (You will be hated by all). While we do not yet know the motive—whether personal grudge or random violence—the “sign” here is that we live in a time where public spaces are no longer guaranteed sanctuaries of safety. The fact that police must look at “all possible angles” reveals a complex, fractured society where trust is scarce, and betrayal (as mentioned in the Gospel regarding relatives and friends) is a genuine possibility.

Call to Action for a Christian Communicator

After analyzing this event through the lens of Luke 21, the call to action for a Christian communicator is clear: Use “Katalinuhan” (Wisdom) to seek the Truth. Jesus said, “Bibigyan ko kayo ng katalinuhan at ng pananalitang hindi kayang tutulan”

(I will give you wisdom and speech that cannot be refuted).

A Christian communicator must:

1. Avoid Sensationalism: Do not just report the gore of the crime for views. Focus on the dignity of the 52-year-old victim.
2. Demand Accountability: Use the power of words to ensure the investigation remains active. The “testimony” (pagpapatotoo) required here is to keep the spotlight on the case so

that it does not become just another unsolved statistic.

3. Promote Peace: In a time of violence, the communicator must write in a way that heals the community rather than inciting more fear.

The tragedy in Cabanatuan City is a painful reminder that we live in the imperfect world Jesus described—a world of persecution, violence, and death. However, the gospels concludes with a powerful promise: “Sa inyong pagtitiis ay tatamuhin ninyo ang buhay na walang hanggan” (By your endurance you will gain your lives). The ultimate message is one of endurance. For the family of the cyclist, for the investigators, and for us as observers, we are called to endure in the pursuit of justice. We are called to trust that despite the violence on our highways, the truth will eventually prevail, and God’s justice will have the final say.

Chapter 3

The devastating fire that swept through Barangay Matadero

Last December 27, 2025, serves as a modern “mountain” experience, echoing the setting of Mark 3:13-19. In the Gospel, Jesus ascends the mountain to call “those whom he wanted,” creating a community defined not by their possessions, but by their proximity to Him and one another. The 70 families in Cabanatuan, stripped of their homes and belongings just days before the New Year, find themselves in a similar state of radical dependency. Just as the Apostles were called out of their ordinary lives to form a new family, these survivors are being called to rely on a communal strength that transcends material wealth. In the ashes of their “light materials,” a sturdier foundation is being built—one made of the “heavy materials” of faith and solidarity.

The appointment of the Twelve was not merely for status, but for a mission:

“that they might be with him and that he might send them out.” We see this dual purpose reflected in the response of the Cabanatuan community. The victims staying in the church and covered court are “being with” one another in their shared trauma, while the barangay officials and donors act as those “sent out” to provide healing and relief. When resident Christian Bautista speaks of celebrating the New Year despite the loss, he is exercising the spiritual authority Jesus granted the Apostles—the power to cast out the “demons” of despair and hopelessness. This resilience is a living sermon, proving that while fire can destroy a house, it cannot extinguish the divine spark of hope within a community gathered in faith.

Ultimately, Mark 3:13-19 reminds us that the calling of God often happens in moments of transition and vulnerability. The Apostles were a diverse group—some were “Sons of

Thunder,” others were simple fishermen—yet they were united by a single call. Similarly, the tragedy in Matadero has leveled the social playing field, uniting neighbors in a common struggle for survival and rebirth. As donations arrive and the community rallies, we witness the Gospel in action: a body of believers functioning as the hands and feet of Christ. As these families face the New Year, their journey from the fire to the future mirrors the apostolic journey—leaving behind what is lost to embrace a mission of rebuilding, fueled by the conviction that God is present even in the midst of the ruins.

Reflection on Faith and Farming of Cabanatuan City

(Mt. 5 13-16)

In the vast, golden fields of Cabanatuan, a farmer named Mang Jose once noticed his rice stalks turning white and hollow—the dreaded “whitehead” caused by stem borers.

In a panic, he spent his remaining savings on the strongest insecticides, spraying his fields daily until the air smelled of chemicals. He thought he was being a “good farmer” by fighting hard, but his harvest was the lowest it had ever been. He didn’t realize that by over-spraying, he had killed the spiders and friendly wasps that naturally ate the pest’s eggs, leaving the stem borers to feast undisturbed inside the stalks. This mirrors the Gospel’s warning about the “Salt of the Earth.” When we lose our “saltiness”—our inherent wisdom and balance—we become ineffective. Just as salt is meant to preserve, a farmer’s role is to preserve the natural balance of the ecosystem. By ignoring the science provided by PhilRice and reacting out of fear rather than discernment, we lose our purpose as stewards, becoming like salt that has lost its flavor and is “thrown out and trampled underfoot.”

True stewardship requires us to be the “Light of the World, ”

Which often means standing out by doing things differently. Imagine a young farmer who, after attending a PhilRice seminar, decides to stop routine spraying and instead spends her mornings carefully inspecting the undersides of leaves for egg clusters. Her neighbors might mock her for “doing nothing” while they are busy with their spray tanks, but her “light” is her

knowledge. She understands that the stem borer is a hidden enemy, tucked away where chemicals cannot reach. By practicing synchronized planting and burying stubble after harvest, she shines a light on a better path. This is the “city on a hill” that Jesus spoke of—a life (or a farm) that serves as a visible, shining example of truth. When her harvest comes in heavy and healthy without the cost of expensive poisons, her success becomes a beacon that leads her community away from waste and toward sustainable abundance.



In the golden fields of Cabanatuan, a farmer faces the “whitehead” pest—a hollow harvest that mirrors our own spiritual trials. This reflection explores the delicate balance between modern agriculture and ancient faith.

Connecting the PhilRice advisory to the Gospel teaches us that our “good works” are not always the loudest or most aggressive actions, but the ones rooted in patience and respect for God’s design. The “deadheart” and “whitehead” in our fields are often symptoms of a deeper disconnect from nature, just as spiritual emptiness is a symptom of a disconnect from the Creator. When we follow the advice to plow under the stubble and protect the “natural

enemies” of pests, we are practicing a form of silent, faithful labor. We are letting our light shine not for our own glory, but to show that we honor the intricate world the Father has built. In every healthy grain of rice harvested in Cabanatuan, there is a story of a farmer who chose to be salt and light—someone who protected the balance of the earth and shared the light of wisdom, ensuring that the land remains fruitful for generations to come.

Seeking Peace in a Changing World Matthew 7:7-12

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you... So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

The Gospel of Matthew presents us with a profound promise regarding the nature of God’s providence. It encourages a proactive faith—asking, seeking, and knocking. However, this isn’t just a call for personal gain; it is a blueprint for how a community should interact with its Creator and with one another.

When we look at the current events in Nueva Ecija

As of February 2026, we see a community “seeking” and “knocking” for the door of peace and order. The intensified operations led by Regional Director PBGEN Jess B. Mendez and the local law enforcement are a practical manifestation of a society that refuses to remain passive in the face of crime and drugs. Just as the scripture promises that those who seek will find, the diligent efforts of our authorities to recover dangerous weapons and dismantle drug operations reflect a communal “seeking” for a safer environment for our families. The passage concludes with the “Golden Rule”: to do to others what we would have them do to us. In the context of crime prevention, this principle is two-fold.

First, it validates the necessity of justice. A community that values safety must protect the vulnerable from those who would do harm. By removing illegal drugs and weapons from the streets of Cabanatuan and surrounding areas, the law enforcement is upholding the right of every citizen to live without fear—treating the public with the dignity and protection they themselves would desire.

Second, it serves as a reminder for restorative justice and moral responsibility. The “Golden Rule” challenges those involved in criminal activities to realize that their actions ripple through the community, hurting neighbors and families. The enforcement of law is not just about arrests; it is about restoring the “Law and the Prophets”—the moral order that allows a society to flourish.

The events in Nueva Ecija remind us that peace is not merely the absence of conflict, but the presence of active, persistent work. As we “ask” for a better society, we must also be willing to “seek” justice and “knock” on the doors of change through cooperation with authorities and adherence to moral law. When leadership and the citizenry align under the principle of doing good for one another, the promise of the Gospel becomes a reality: the doors of safety and

order are opened, and the community finds the peace it so diligently seeks.

About the Author

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